

AT MALIETOA'S COURT.

How an Embassy From King Kalakou Was Feasted at Samoa.

SPEECHES AND KAVA.

Remarks for Table Cloths and Pig.
Kava and Breadfruit for Dinner.

March 2. A. Strong in San Francisco Examiner.

Honolulu (H. I.), March 3.—We had brought out the long wicker chairs on the sand, handed them over the veranda rail in fact, for the beach house, "Mancua," is by the sea.

Two young fellows in white duck—we call them "Pueaka" and "Tusi-Tusi" since their return from Samoa—were stretched out in comfortable attitudes, smoking and talking about the tropics and their experiences there.

"The tired of hearing about the political side of your Samoan trip," I said, and with truth, for "Pueaka" (Samoa for shadow catcher, artist) had accompanied the Hawaiian Embassy, of which "Tusi-Tusi" (secretary, quick writer) was an important member, and I had heard the political situation of those islands, struggling in the grasp of the Germans, reviewed in all its lights.

"Tell me," I said, "something about the people themselves. Were they wild savages, speared and ferocious, brandishing spears and shrieking for gore?"

"Tusi-Tusi" laughed. "I never saw a more dignified man, or one with finer manners, than King Malietoa. He wore a malo or breech-cloth, but his skin was like shining bronze."

"Well," said Pueaka, "old Malietoa sent his canoe for us early one Friday morning, and this was to be the first formal presentation of the Hawaiian Embassy to the King. It was about 9 o'clock in the morning—a beautiful day."

"Hot as blazes," from Tusi-Tusi. "Malietoa's brother steered the canoe, four men paddled, and Polon, a high chief, stood at the bow acting as pilot through the reef."

"Did the chiefs wear any clothes?" I asked.

"No, nothing but a strip of tapa or bark cloth around the loins, and wreaths of seeds and flowers about their necks. Handsome fellows they were, too, over six feet tall, as most of the Samoans are, beautifully oiled, and shining in the sun like bronze statues come to life."

"When we were about half a mile from where the grand meeting was to be, the boat turned in and landed, in order for us to put on our togs. An old man came down to the shore, welcomed us and took us to his house, all spread with fine mats and one ancient chair with three legs."

"He made us a neat little speech which was translated by the court interpreter, a half-caste American and Samoan. One of us thanked them and then the kava bowl was passed around and we all took a drink."

"Then a mat was let down from the rafters and we went into the little improvised dressing-room, opened our grip-sacks and put on our togs."

"There were six big chiefs waiting to receive us—a delegation from the Council-house. They shook hands with us all around, beckoned us to follow them, and then fled away through a grove of bread-fruit and banana trees."

"When we arrived at King Malietoa's house he welcomed us right royally and placed us on his right and left hand on a bench covered with tapes and fine mats. Then the kava bowl was brought out and one of the Princesses made the kava."

"They make quite a ceremony over it. When it was ready the Princess—"

"Her side garment," said Tusi-Tusi, "was a petticoat of leaves, and I assure you, it was very becoming."

"She was as pretty as a picture," returned Pueaka, enthusiastically, "and so smiling and graceful. She clasped her hands as a signal that all was ready, and the body-servant of the King took his Majesty's drink—cup made of half a coconut, polished, and filled it with the beverage, first spilling a part on the ground to ward away the evil spirits."

"We had to drink ours in separate cups," said Tusi-Tusi. "It is sure death to use a royal coconut."

"Did you spill yours on the ground, too, Tusi-Tusi?" I asked.

"Of course," he answered, "it was a regular game of follow my leader. They believe if any one drinks without first breaking the spell by spilling some, he will surely die. After this some American whisky and gin were passed around."

"Were there any women there all this time?"

"The queen was there. She was a high chiefess from some other group farther south, and several princesses. They all wore their hair dyed. They covered it with a plaster of lime and water, and that bleaches it to a reddish color that is very becoming to some of them."

"What did they wear?"

"Oh, some wore petticoats of leaves that hung from the waist down and made the women look like ballet dancers, or they wore a piece of tapa closely wrapped around the loins. Then they have necklaces of

bright seeds and shells and flowers in their hair. I tell you they are handsome!"

"When we had rested and had more speeches the King arose and escorted us, single file, through a large village to the Council-house, which was a grass hut thirty-five by fifty feet, and crowded with chiefs. There must have been a hundred, all solemnly sitting cross-legged on their mats in rows, according to their rank."

"They wore flowers in their hair," continued Pueaka, "and strings of bright-red seeds around their necks, and they fairly glistened with coconut oil. Each carried a staff of polished wood and a fan. We were shown to a raised bench at one end of the house, with one of the fine mats at our feet. There wasn't a sign of a woman anywhere."

"Then one of the big chiefs stood up, and took the speaking staff the orator always holds while he is addressing the house. I can't remember all he said, though it was very well translated."

"I remember," said Tusi-Tusi. "The first man who spoke was the King's orator. He made us welcome to the village of Tifua and Pipula—to the birthplace of the Malietoa, and the seat of government. I tell you he talked like a book."

"The chief responded," said Pueaka, "and Tusi-Tusi here made a fine speech in thrilling Fenimore Cooper style that seemed to please everybody."

"Then came kava, this time made by one of the high chiefs. After about two hours of speeches a great noise was heard at the end of the village, and a procession filed along to the music of drums. First came four men bearing a litter with 250 pounds of roast pig on it, then came men with taro, chickens, ducks, bread fruit, coconuts, yams and fish, about sixty men in all."

"These things were all piled up before the house, and presented to us—cooked edibles enough for 1,400 people. Then the feast began: banana leaves were laid on the ground for tablecloths, and the tid-bits picked out for the guests. I was hungry, and the way I tackled the spring chicken and coconut milk was a wonder to the aborigines."

"After the feast the oldest of the chiefs stood up among the mountains of grub and divided it out among the chiefs of the villages, who, when their names were called, advanced and took their portion."

"After it was all divided but the big hog and about a ton of fruit and fish—which was our share to take home with us—the feasting began in the village."

"We sat around and smoked awhile, and then those six old chiefs got up, oiled themselves well with coconut oil, and danced the seava for us, a thing they had never done for foreigners before. They kept it up for two hours, doing the wildest things, prancing and leaping and throwing themselves like mad."

"After more speeches and kava the King escorted us back to his house, and we lay off in the shadow of the palms and smoked, starting homeward at 10 o'clock that night."

"Did you ever see Malietoa again?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," said Pueaka; "we saw him many times. What a shame it is to think that he is now in the power of the Germans, his beautiful islands the scene of riots and war. I cannot believe that Bismarck knows half."

"Bother Bismarck!" returned Tusi-Tusi, with warmth. "If the Americans had any spirit at all they would not have calmly laid by and—"

"But they had no authority from their Government—"

"Oh, well," I said, rising and shaking the sand from my dress, "if you fellows are going to talk politics, I'll leave."

I. S.

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